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SEVEN RESCUED FROM LIFE RAFT AFTER ABANDONING SHIP OFF THE NEW JERSEY COAST, NOAA ANNOUNCES

Thanks to environmental satellites in the international Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking Program, Cospas-Sarsat, and to the U.S. Coast Guard, seven fisherman were rescued after their fishing boat began to sink off the New Jersey Coast on Feb. 5. Satellites operated by the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and by the Russian government, detected a distress signal from the fishing vessel Ranger. The Coast Guard received an Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) distress alert from the 107-foot vessel homeported in Port Elizabeth, N.J. The alert started a search and rescue mission that used five rescue planes and helicopters from Coast Guard units in three states to rescue the seven men.

Rescue planes and helicopters from Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C., a rescue plane from Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, Mass., as well as two helicopters from Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City all were involved with the rescue which took place in the early morning hours 80 miles east of Atlantic City.

Arriving at the Ranger, the rescue crew hoisted five fishermen to the safety of the helicopter. A Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer stayed behind in the life raft with two remaining fisherman in the 10-15 foot seas and 25 mph winds awaiting rescue from a second Coast Guard rescue helicopter. The Rescue Swimmer and the two remaining fisherman were rescued about 45 minutes later. All the fishermen were taken back to Coast Guard Group Air Station Atlantic City and met by awaiting ambulance and EMS from Atlantic City International Airport. Six of the seven were released with one going to a local hospital.

"These fishermen helped us save their lives. The EPIRB told us where to search, survival suits kept them warm and their life raft kept them out of the frigid water until our people could get them to safety," said Captain Bob Durfey, Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Group Air-Station Atlantic City.

The Coast Guard strongly recommends having charts, a global positioning device and reliable means of communication on board. It is critically important that

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mariners rely on a VHF-FM radio and EPIRBs as their primary means of communicating a distress.

"This particular rescue once again demonstrates the effectiveness of the Copas-Sarsat System and NOAA's commitment to protecting lives and property," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Truly, Cospas-Sarsat works to take the 'search' out of search and rescue."

The Cospas-Sarsat system uses a constellation of satellites in geostationary and polar orbits to detect and locate emergency beacons on vessels and aircraft in distress. NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NOAA Satellite and Information Service) represents the United States in this program, providing satellite platforms and ground equipment, and operating the U.S. Mission Control Center.

NOAA's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES) can instantly detect emergency signals. The polar-orbiting satellites in the system detect emergency signals as they circle the Earth from pole to pole. Emergency signals are sent to the U.S. Mission Control Center at NOAA's facility in Suitland, Md., then automatically sent to rescue forces around the world. Today there are 35 countries participating in the system.

NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NOAA Satellites and Information) is the nation's primary source of space-based meteorological and climate data. NOAA Satellites and Information operates the nation's environmental satellites, which are used for weather forecasting, climate monitoring and other environmental applications such as fire detection, ozone monitoring and sea surface temperature measurements.

NOAA Satellites and Information also operates three data centers, which house global data bases in climatology, oceanography, solid earth geophysics, marine geology and geophysics, solar-terrestrial physics, and paleoclimatology.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Internet:
NOAA - http://www.noaa.gov
NOAA Satellites and Information - http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov.
NOAA's role in the Cospas-Sarsat program - http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov/

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